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CHILDREN IN PALESTINE.

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Beirut, Syria.

IN WRITING of the children in Palestine at the present day, it must first of all be clearly understood that the people who live in Palestine are not all of the same race; that the inhabitants of different sections, or sometimes even of two villages near together, are of different religions, with sharply drawn lines of separation in customs and beliefs. Thus we find Druses on Mount Carmel; Metawileh in northern Galilee; Bedouin in Jericho to the south and throughout Moab; Circassians in their colonies east of the Jordan; both Catholic and Greek Christians in Haifa, Nazareth, Bethlehem, and nearly all the cities; Jews in Safed, Tiberias, Jerusalem, and their colonies near Cæsarea, near Jaffa, and about the waters of Merom and the upper Jordan; and Moslems in Acre, Hebron, Jerusalem, Gaza, Nablus, and nearly all the villages. Druses, Bedouin, Metawileh, and Circassians are all regarded by the government as Moslem sects.

There seems to be no tie to bind all these various sects together except the debasing one of their common superstitions. These seem thoroughly ingrained into the nature of all, whatever their sect, and Jewish, Moslem, and Christian mothers alike

have the haunting fear of the influence of the "evil eye"—a real and terrible power to the poor mothers. It is supposed to bring misfortune, disease, and death itself to the unhappy object of its malign influence. It may be warded off by charms or by use of the name of God. If, in visiting a family, you should notice a child, admire it, remark on its health, and say how well and fat it seemed, without also introducing the name of God into the sentence, the mother would be much alarmed, and would endeavor by a liberal use of the sacred name to repair the injury you might be inflicting; and if, within a few days, the child should sicken and die, it would be felt that you were responsible. It is well to remember, when you fall into the indiscretion of expressing admiration, to add at once the wish that the Lord would preserve the life and possessions, and add his blessing. Judging from the actions of the mother, you feel that this imaginary evil power is deemed to be the only one threatening the safety of the child, for she allows it liberties in food and in straying about that would seem to be fatal nine times out of ten. A nursing baby is promptly given anything it cries for—from cooked food to raw vegetables and unripe fruit. I have seen babies just beginning to creep allowed to eat green grapes and cucumbers. The wonder is, not that the evil eye does not smite them, but that they survive such careless treatment. Both Moslems and Christians tie lumps of alum, blue beads, teeth of animals, and amulets of many kinds about their children's necks or waists, or sometimes braid them tightly into their hair. All these ideas they have in common, but beyond that and being under the rule of the Turks there is nothing else, not even their festivals—if you except the one which marks the accession of the sultan and which is never observed with any spirit, if at all, except where Turkish influence is strong. Even the Greek and Latin Christians have their great church festivals twelve days apart. Taking all the feast days together of all the sects, if it were possible for one to observe them all, life would indeed seem "one long holiday." There are the two Christian New Year's days, also the Jewish and the Moslem at different times of our year, the Jewish Purim, the Christian carnivals and Easters,

the Mohammedan Bairam and the Aied el Futr lasting three days; also their sultan's accession, his birthday, and that of the prophet; the Jewish Passover and Feast of Tabernacles; our Christmas, besides innumerable saints' days and minor feasts. Children in Palestine do have at least enough days appointed for enjoyment, and the Moslem children look forward as eagerly to their three days of Aied el Futr, after Ramadan, when they are dressed in new clothes as fine as their parents can give them and have merry-go-rounds and swings and plenty of sweets, as an American boy does to the Fourth of July.

While Jew, Moslem, and Christian differ somewhat in the way they bring up their children, yet the babies all have much the same treatment, and it is true of nearly all children in the East that they have almost nothing of what we call child life. While they are yet babies they are taught to run after and carry infants younger than themselves, and whatever work can be found which they can do is put upon them when very young.

The child begins life with a wail, uttering his protest against the woes of his existence before he has discovered that there are joys in store for him. He is promptly salted down (literally salt being rubbed over his whole body) and tied securely into his cradle, where he stays for hours and even days at a time, taking his food in that position, and becoming so accustomed to it that he rather likes it. At least he is philosophical enough not to cry over it or over the fact that the back of his head becomes flattened by lying on it so constantly. Most of the babies are wrapped in swaddling clothes, the arms fastened down to the sides and the whole baby looking like a funny doll. The Bedouin women are apt to carry their babies in their heavy dark veils, the ends tied across the forehead of the mother and the baby peeping out of the bundle on her back. Baths to these children are not even a luxury—they are unknown. This, of course, does not apply to the children of the young women educated in the boarding schools. They bathe their babies and take pride in keeping them fresh and clean. But the average baby does not have to be troubled with too much attention to toilet, as you can see for yourself in the picture of the two

Bedouin women carrying their children on their shoulders. It is only in the most degraded villages that you see children running about entirely unclothed, but many of the older ones seem to



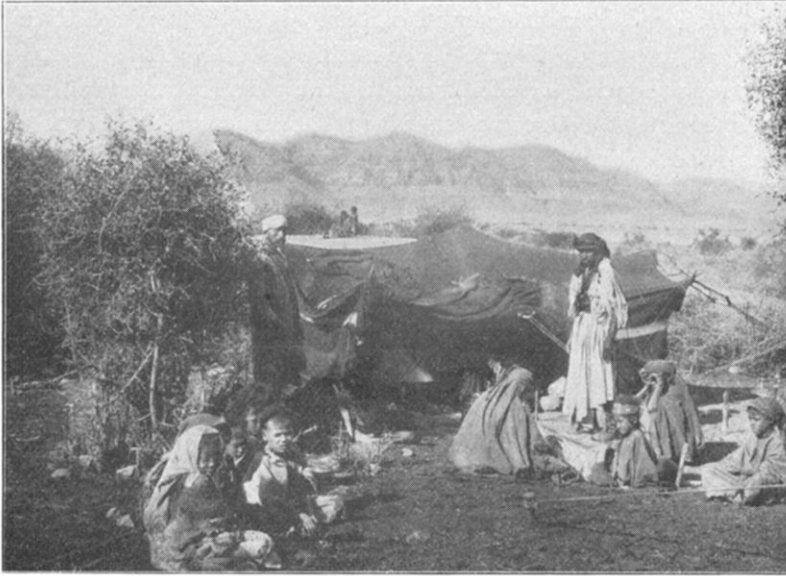
BEDOUIN MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

possess nothing more satisfactory than rags, and it is a mystery how they fasten them on.

A number of older children can be seen in the picture of the tent of the Bedouin at Jericho. If you should go among them tomorrow with your kodak, you would probably see much the same sight; men, women, and children alike seem to have nothing to do

which prevents them from sitting idle by the hour. Living is reduced to its lowest terms: the black goats' hair roof above them, the soiled torn clothing they wear, the coarse black bread they eat, all point to poverty and degradation. The children are like little animals, but seem to thrive, owing probably to the fact that they are out of doors most of the time. The boys have half of their heads shaved, leaving a lock in front. Were they to go away from their encampment, they would cover their heads with a cap or a "keffiyeh", as the men do, with a rope of twisted goats' hair to keep it on. As soon as the children are old enough they are sent off with the goats, or sheep, or cows; the

girls have their share of baby tending and helping with the simple housework. There are no dishes to wash, rarely are clothes washed, of course there is no ironing day, nor sweeping or dusting to be done. But I doubt whether any little girl who



BEDOUIN FAMILY

dislikes her share of the household duties in an American home would care to change it for the privilege of sharing this tent home life with its few burdens, after trying a day of it. Almost all girls in the East, except those living in cities, have the duty of going to the fountain for water at least twice a day. The little girls are early taught to fill, lift, poise, and carry the small jars on their shoulders or heads, as their elders do with the large jars. In this way they acquire a straight back and a graceful walk, but it is hard work, for they often have to go a long way, and carry the jars up steep hills in the hot sun.

The children in these tents grow up in utter ignorance of everything to be learned from books. They are always allowed to listen to whatever talk may be going on, and they very early

learn to use bad, vile words, and to curse each other most fluently. To the modern traveler in the Holy Land it would seem as if the first word taught to every child was "backsheesh;" at any rate, it is the first word one hears from even the tiniest child as one passes through the streets or among the wheat fields and vineyards. Even from their mothers the children hear curses and dreadful language. There is something stolid and dull about many of the faces, especially among the girls, but now and then a pair of bright eyes or an intelligent face makes you long to try what good training would do for them. To us the tent and the primitive manner of living would hardly seem like home, but to them it doubtless is very cozy, and they certainly are devotedly attached to their own way of living and would be very homesick if forced to live in houses. They have the example of untold numbers of generations behind them, and in going among these tents we can picture to ourselves the lives of Abraham and the patriarchs and all of those who "dwelled in tents," for undoubtedly they lived very much as these tribes do now, sleeping under just such black roofs, eating the coarse bread, the curdled milk and goats' meat, that form today the chief food of the Bedouin, wearing flowing garments cut in the same fashion that we now see, and interested in much the same things.

Life in the Moslem villages and among the Metawileh is not of a very much higher grade, although they live in houses and in some parts of the country teach their boys something of their religion. The Bedouin can hardly be said to have a religion at all, it is so covered over with superstition. Among the Moslems the girls are looked down upon, are made to feel that they are unwelcome and of an inferior sex, and their lot is a hard one. When they are eleven or twelve they learn to wear veils and are married very soon after that, frequently having to do work suitable for grown women. Among the Circassian, in their colonies east of the Jordan, the girls are much freer and are not veiled until after marriage.

In the picture of the group of Metawileh you will notice that they seem to be hardy, robust men. They are all farmers or shepherds, and the boys are early accustomed to an outdoor life

of hard work. They can walk great distances and seem tireless in energy. The sect is very exclusive, and the children are taught not to eat anything prepared by one of another sect, nor meat killed by an alien. They will give you an earthen jar to drink



GROUP OF METAWILEH

from, but break it at once, as your touch has defiled it. They have no objection, however, to money which has passed from hand to hand among many infidels. There are many religious sheiks among them, who are learned men, and the boys are not allowed to grow up in ignorance of their religion; some of them are taught to read. The government does not allow mission schools among these Moslem sects.

The Jewish children are, many of them, carefully instructed in the performance of the rites and ceremonies and religious duties expected of them. There are some examples of godly family life where the children are well brought up, but for the most part the families are huddled together and are as degraded as their neighbors, and it seems hard to rouse them to a desire

for better things, bound down as they are by their ceremonial law, traditions, and superstitions. The picture chosen to show examples of Jewish boys is one where two of them are helping a vegetable vender to dispose of his wares. They have an aptitude for bargaining, and are bright and shrewd. The boys when taught trades make good, capable workmen, but their great curse is foreign support, which makes them idle and shiftless. I have come in contact with few Jews and know but little of their peculiar customs.

The group of six boys shows very well what is the appearance of the Greek, Greek-Catholic, Catholic, or Protestant Christian boys in both Palestine and Syria. They are bright, active little fellows, accustomed to having their own way and to feeling themselves of importance in the family, as all boys in the East are. They are rarely taught to control themselves, or to give up to others, and, if there is one boy in a family, he is the autocrat.

Perhaps a good way to let you see something of the home life of Christian children in the East is to follow a little girl and boy through a day of their lives. We will say that their father is a Greek and has the trade of a mason. Perhaps he lives in Nazareth and is comfortably well off, as he is able to work and support his family, although he stops work for the fifty feast days of his church, besides the Sundays. We will call the girl Miriam (or Mary) and the boy Yusef (Joseph). Both are very common names. The Bible names are much used, Abraham, Solomon, and David being especial favorites. The Moslems have characteristic names of their own, such as Mohammed, Ali, Mustupha, and Fatimeh and Ayesha for the girls. We will suppose that Miriam is nine years old and her brother Yusef seven. Yusef goes to school, taught by a Greek priest. Miriam began going, but had only gotten as far as the primer when her mother took her out, as she needed her at home, and she has now nearly forgotten what she had learned before.

The family is astir early in the morning—they have all been sleeping in a row on the floor, covered over with a heavily wadded quilt. The upper sheet is sewed firmly to the quilt, and

changed now and then, as occasion requires. The children are ready for the day at once, for they do not have to go through the processes of undressing and dressing, and bathing and combing. Miriam's hair is braided with tight braids which are tied at the



GROUP OF CHRISTIAN CHILDREN

ends, and over her head is a square thin cotton veil called a "meudeel," folded cornerwise and tied under her chin. This she does not wear at night, and in the morning her toilet is complete when she has smoothed her hair away from her face, poured water over her hands, washed her face, and tied on the "meudeel." Perhaps once a week her mother will "get at" the children and comb their hair. The children who attend the mission schools are obliged to come each morning with smoothly combed hair and clean hands and faces.

There is no formal breakfast, but as the children feel hungry they come and ask for bread, and they have olives or a tomato or some remains of cold cooked food given them to eat with the bread. The main meal of the day is about sunset, and cooked

food is usually prepared for that time, when the father comes home from his work. Miriam has been sent to the fountain with her jar, and Yusef is told to mind the younger children, while his mother folds up the beds and puts them away in the recess in the wall designed for them. The baby is tied in his cradle, the girls of four and two run in and out chasing the hens, which are as much at home in the living room as the children, and all of them are munching at their bread. They are all pretty children with dark eyes, sunburned faces, regular features, and thick, dark hair inclining to curl. Yusef wears a red cap called a tarboosh and a shirt of heavy striped cotton, lined and buttoned in front. Possibly a thin cotton shirt is worn under this in winter. The only other garment is of cotton, dyed a deep indigo blue and made into very full drawers, gathered in at the waist and with openings at the lower corners for the feet. Very frequently you see boys dressed in the "ghumbâz," which is like a shirt, only made long, coming down to the knees or below, and worn over the drawers, a girdle holding it in place at the waist. When dressed in this "ghumbâz" and the full drawers, a boy is well handicapped as to running, and I doubt if an American boy would tolerate such incumbrances for a day. In winter the boys are apt to wear either a very large handkerchief, called a "keffiyeh," or a small shawl tied around their heads and necks, although the feet and legs are bare. Yusef has shoes, though not for ordinary everyday wear, of red leather, with flat soles, the toes coming to a sharp point, and curling up a little. Sometimes you notice boys or men going from one town to another, trudging along over the stony roads with their bare feet, while they carry their shoes carefully in their hand, on the principle that shoes wear out while feet do not, if they are tough.

Miriam's dress is of gay print or of cotton dyed a dark blue and made simply with the skirt sewed to the short-waisted bodice. If she lived in Bethlehem, she would wear the picturesque costume peculiar to the women there and be early initiated into the mysteries of the ornamental needle work with which their garments are adorned. Miriam comes back with her jar. "Why were you so long, my daughter?" "There were many

waiting their turn at the fountain, and when my turn came Im Brahim pushed me away, and I had to wait for fear she would break my jar, and then I had to come home the long way because the bad boys who live by the big oak tree were throw-



VEGETABLE DEALERS

ing stones at the girls." "Oh, the rascals! Your father shall go and break their heads; come, Miriam, help me with the bread." The two sit down on the floor to their work (almost all the work in an eastern home is done sitting on the floor — the small round table being about a foot high), and in due time a large straw tray is covered with the round balls of dough, and the mother puts it on her head and takes it to the public oven. Yusef paid scant attention to the children, but has been in the road in front of the house with his playfellows, the neighbor's children, engaged in a game of marbles. So engrossed are they that it seems to them hardly worth while to get out of the way for mules and donkeys passing along from time to time with their loads of wheat, cut straw, olive oil, or fruit. Yusef and his friends have their enthusiasm over different amusements in their season; now it is tops, now kites, now hopscotch, now snaring birds with twigs or bird lime. Occasionally you will see a boy riding a "stick horse," carefully selected from a stable full of fine Arabians, but it is not common. Marbles are always in season, and the playing is usually for "keeps." The children,

especially the Moslems, learn to gamble very early. Yusef has soon to stop and run off to school, carrying his little calico bag for his primer as the other boys do.

The mother returns from the oven and brings with her a basket of fruit, and the children gather to eat it. Miriam cleans out the narghilehs that her father and his friends used the evening before, and later goes and carries some bread and fruit to her father who is working in the village. In the springtime she is very busy helping her mother feed and care for the silkworms. She has to help gather the fresh mulberry leaves, and it is a very absorbing work, for they have fresh food about five times in the twenty-four hours. In the fall the second crop of mulberry leaves feeds the family sheep. Each family buys one or two sheep, and it is systematically stuffed with the mulberry leaves made into a ball and forced down its throat until it is very fat. In October or November the sheep are killed and the meat is cooked in the fat and salted down for winter use. Miriam makes another trip to the fountain, and at sunset the family gathers for the evening meal ; it may be of rice cooked in fat, with a stew of vegetables and meat, or it may be lentils, "Esau's pottage," or a salad savory with onions eaten with a cooked dish, or broiled meat. In some places the custom still prevails for the father and the sons to have their meal first, waited on by the mother and girls, who eat what is left later on. Miriam kisses her father's hands when he comes home and runs to do his bidding. People in the East are fond of children and like to have them about, indulging them one moment and scolding them the next. Miriam's pleasures are few. Perhaps what she enjoys most is the time she spends at the fountain, for, while waiting her turn, there is time to play and chatter with the other girls. One day is much the same as another, and in following the children thus far we can form an idea of what they will be likely to be doing through their childhood, till Yusef is apprenticed to a trade and Miriam, at fourteen or fifteen, probably is married. The picture of the small boy, by himself, is a cousin of Yusef's, who lives in Jerusalem, dressed in his best clothes, and feeling very fine and important.

The children of Palestine are having much done for them, and Protestant mission schools are established in all the principal towns. There are boarding schools for girls in Nazareth, Bethlehem, Jaffa, and Jerusalem. Light is pouring in, and we hope that the children of future generations will have intelligent, pious mothers, who will train their children to be obedient, truthful, and honest in all things, free from superstitions, and teach them to love and honor their Savior, who lived as a boy in their own land.



YUSEF'S COUSIN